



TEXAS POLICE CHIEFS ASSOCIATION

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POLICE ADMINISTRATORS

March 31, 2020

TO THE HONORABLE JUDGE LEE H. ROSENTHAL,

As the President of the Texas Police Chiefs Association and a Chief of Police in the State of Texas, I am sending this letter in support of Chief Art Acevedo of the Houston Police Department. We are concerned about a lawsuit pending in the United States District Court Southern District of Texas, Houston Division in Case No. 4:19-cv-00226 (Class Action) that seeks to release thousands of felons from the Harris County Jail.

The Texas Police Chiefs Association is the largest professional association of law enforcement executives in Texas and represents over 1,500 members. We believe a release of thousands of felony defendants in any county in our state will strain the already limited law enforcement resources and pose a danger to all Texans. The strain and safety concerns will be felt well beyond the Houston area.

Police departments across our state have risked their lives to serve their communities during these unprecedented times. Many departments are already working with limited resources and they could be hampered even more with the release of criminals back on the streets of our communities. The likelihood of recidivism is high for some of the prisoners proposed to be released from the Harris County Jail. Additional crimes will be committed and innocent civilians will be endangered.

We recommend an individual judicial risk assessment for any offender prior to release. This risk assessment should balance the risk of harm to the offender from COVID-19 versus the risk of harm to public safety if they are released. We also support alternatives to release that include testing and isolation of positive inmates within the current jail or an alternate facility.

We urge the Court to consider alternates to a mass release being proposed by the Plaintiffs. Alternates should be transparent and include measures for testing inmates for COVID-19 to avoid spreading the virus unwittingly by releasing infected individuals out into the public. We further urge the Court to consider other alternatives to a mass release of dangerous persons that do not cause an unnecessary risk to the general public.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Gene Ellis", is positioned above the typed name and title.

Chief Gene Ellis
TPCA President
Chief of Police
Belton, Texas